

Representative Jim Jacks

STATE BUDGET:

Shrinking state government in a tough economy

Now that the Legislature has finished work for the year, I can tell you that some of the most difficult decisions I've ever had to make in my life were related to the state budget this session.

You may recall that last year we slashed \$3.2 billion from state spending when we first adopted the *all-cuts* 2009-2011 biennial budget.

Certainly, the international recession has left no nation untouched. Clark County is one of the most hard-hit regions in the Northwest. Our state as a whole is no different than anywhere else – we're struggling mightily to climb out of the hole.

But climb out of it we will. In fact, the first measures we passed this session pounded home the need for further spending cuts and greater efficiency in government. To be sure, the final supplemental budget includes further, deeper cuts.

Talk about a gap. It's more like a canyon – a *\$2.8 billion* canyon – separating on the one side, essential public programs, and on the other side, the funds we need to pay for them.

This year we faced a \$2.8 billion projected shortfall. We filled it in a balanced way by combining federal stimulus money, more cuts, and one-time fund transfers, and by increasing revenue while closing tax loopholes. Our budget is actually smaller this two-year cycle than the last two-year biennial budget.

The 2010 supplemental budget reflects what we believe are the priorities of the majority of Washington citizens. We are:

- Getting people back to work.
- Investing in our kids by reforming K-12 education.
- Protecting our quality of life, our environment and our vulnerable citizens as best we can.

A specific local element in the budget involves the **Larch Corrections Center**. This facility is located in a rural part of north Clark County. It plays a significant role in our community. I have worked closely with my colleagues in Clark County to successfully prevent the closure of Larch so that it can continue to operate and at a reduced level. The good news is that the facility remains half open while the inmate work crews continue to serve our community.

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A report from
your 2010 Legislature

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Washington State
Representative Jim Jacks

49th Legislative District
*A report from
your 2010 Legislature*

Dear Neighbors:

Greetings. Please know that I'm grateful for this continuing honor of helping serve our communities. And certainly, I appreciate the time you've taken today to review *A report from your 2010 Legislature*.

Many of you answered my *Legislative E-Pamphlet & Survey* a few months ago. Thank you kindly. Interactions such as that winter questionnaire and this spring newsletter – not to mention your personal calls, letters, e-mails and other conversations – are a great help in my work. I'm so glad that you stay connected with me, and with other men and women who work for you at every level of government!

We've tackled a diverse array of issues in Olympia. The worldwide financial meltdown was, predictably, right up there at the top of the agenda.

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Capital Budget
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Megan Walsh, my legislative assistant, and I look forward to working with you and other citizens – and with neighborhood, school, and business groups from our 49th Legislative District-Clark County communities in Vancouver west of Interstate 205 and Hazel Dell.

Please feel free to contact my office anytime.

All the best,

Jim Jacks
State Representative
49th Legislative District

A report from your 2010 Legislature

Spring 2010

Representative Jim Jacks • A report from your 2010 Legislature

EDUCATION:

Changing the way we do funding for our schools

When it comes to the schools, our Washington State Constitution is very clear. Our “paramount duty” is making sure that all children get a first-class education. The problem over the years is that there are always disagreements as to just exactly what “first-class” means.

This session, we have in fact enacted several very positive education ideas.

One measure in particular, House Bill 2776, continues building on the groundwork that we put down last year for school-funding reform. The new measure, which I co-sponsored, launches the first round of recommendations from the Quality Education Council. This is the group charged with building on the 2009 foundation we constructed. The bill this year:

- Directs a phase-in of smaller class sizes of 17 students in kindergarten through third grade by the 2017-2018 school year.
- Creates a first-rate template for school-funding to make sure this budgeting process is a great deal easier for the public to grasp – and so then be able to engage in the process.
- Requires that the state contribute more funding for maintenance and operation costs.
- Improves the way we pay for student-transportation.

Another measure, House Bill 2893, provides some needed relief to school districts, including our own Vancouver and Evergreen School Districts, by increasing funding for state levy equalization for so-called property-poor districts. The new levy-equalization and levy-revenue rates, respectively, for Vancouver are \$1,421,170 and \$1,793,505 (\$3,214,675 total), and the new levy-equalization and levy-revenue rates, respectively, for Evergreen are \$2,327,572, and \$1,966,737 (\$4,294,309 total).

In an emergency measure last year, the Legislature suspended funding for Initiative 728 and Initiative 732, two measures that address class-size reduction and teacher cost-of-living raises, respectively. Terms of this year’s bill, which I co-sponsored, direct that districts can restore that funding in the calculation of their levies.

House Bill 2621 is aimed at bolstering science, technology, engineering and math instruction in our schools. The state Superintendent of Public Instruction will select as many as three Washington high schools to serve as “lighthouses.” What this means is that these schools will offer specific technical assistance and advice to other schools and communities regarding the best strategies for teaching these key disciplines.

Perhaps you’ve heard about the national “Race to the Top” effort to boost student achievement. Washington and other states compete for grants by demonstrating progress in pursuit of reforms and innovations. **This initiative is underscored for our Washington schools in Senate Bill 6696, which is intended to help us win that competition.**

JOB:

Some of our most important capital work is creating good-paying work for citizens

Building the foundation for creating thousands of good-paying jobs is the goal in the Jobs Act of 2010 (which will be on the ballot this fall), as well as the provisions of the supplemental capital budget that we passed this session. This means energy-efficiency upgrades for public schools and affordable housing projects for working families. These types of projects create jobs quickly and maximize return on citizen investment.

Our bottom line is twofold: We want to put our state’s construction industry back to work, and we want to address some of the most pressing economic-development needs in communities all across Washington.

The Washington Works Housing Act of 2010 is another major investment to ensure that moderate-income folks can live as close as reasonably possibly to their work place. The bill directs our state Housing Finance Commission to invest in an innovative new program to build community capacity in work-force housing.

In a win-win for jobs and conservation, the 2010 Legislature established a renewed emphasis on energy-conservation and water-conservation loans provided by public utilities. By helping tear down financial barriers that might stand in the way of conservation projects, we will help put contractors back to work – and construction workers back on the job.

MEDICAL EQUIPMENT:

Providing thorough insurance coverage for people’s needed attention

We passed Senate Bill 6273 this session that requires inclusion of the sales-tax or use-tax calculation in the payment plan for medical-insurance plans that are issued on or after January 1, 2011. (I co-sponsored the “companion” bill in the House.) Insurance coverage must be included for prescribed durable medical equipment and mobility-enhancing equipment.

I believe it’s imperative that health carriers show the sales tax as a *separate line item* in a patient’s bill.

The reason for this approach is pretty simple, really: A patient shouldn’t wind up paying this tax! Some carriers claim they bundle the tax in with the allowable cost of the durable medical equipment, thus making it difficult to tell who’s paying the sales tax.

Durable medical equipment includes a variety of medical gear and devices – including canes, blood-glucose monitors, home-oxygen apparatuses, hospital beds, walkers, and wheelchairs.

Generally, health insurance includes coverage for these types of prescribed devices.

LICENSE CHEATS:

People who use our state’s services should pay their fair share

Many millions of dollars are lost to our state treasury every year. The problem lies in the fact that many thousands of vehicles kept in Clark County are actually licensed in Oregon instead of here where their owners reside.

We passed legislation this session to stop these tax cheaters. House Bill 2436, which I co-sponsored, restores funding to the WSP vehicle licensing fraud unit.

Some people do register their vehicles in Washington, *but continue to keep their out-of-state driver’s license.* They use that nonWashington driver’s license to dodge our (*their!*) state’s sales tax for those goods and services.

People who establish residency here in Washington must register their vehicles here. They are beholden to take care of any and all required licensing fees and taxes.

So, how do we make sure that folks are not just registering their vehicles in Washington and then keeping their Oregon driver’s license to buy products and goods tax-free, you ask? Owners of a vehicle must have a Washington driver’s license in order to license the vehicle.



We’ve been fortunate to welcome many visitors to the state Capitol this year, including a Leadership Clark County contingent.